

VZCZCXRO9945

RR RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN
RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHBW #0462/01 1301618
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 091618Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0272
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEPGDA/USEUCOM JIC VAIHINGEN GE
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 0383

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BELGRADE 000462

SIPDIS

INL FOR J LYLE
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS FOR DEA
AMEMBASSY ROME FOR DEA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR PREL](#) [PGOV PINR XG SR](#)

SUBJECT: SERBIA STREAMLINES ANTI-DRUG EFFORTS BUT GAPS REMAIN

REF: 07 STATE 1647

BELGRADE 00000462 001.2 OF 002

SUMMARY

11. (U) Serbian law enforcement officials reported that Serbia remains a major transit country for drugs between Asia and Europe and that key government offices appear to be making serious efforts to combat the problem. Police and anti-drug representatives expressed thanks for the "high-quality" USG training and equipment assistance and welcomed additional cooperation. End Summary.

MORE CHALLENGES, MORE SUCCESSES

12. (U) Representatives of the Serbian police and Interior Ministry briefed foreign diplomats on Serbia's counter-narcotics efforts and other drug-related issues. The May 7 meeting was co-hosted by the Austrian and German Embassies as part of their co-presidency of the Dublin Group. (The Dublin Group is an informal collaborative body which focuses on drug production, trafficking and abuse. It consists of the European Commission, EU member states, the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan and Norway.) OSCE and UNODC representatives also attended. Serbian Interior Ivan Brandic, head of the anti-smuggling unit at the Interior Ministry, told diplomats that Serbia remained a key transit country for major drugs -- particularly heroin -- from Afghanistan and Turkey. Brandic said that Serbia's main challenge was cutting the flow of drugs, which largely were destined for sale in Western Europe rather than for domestic consumption. Cocaine, precursor, and synthetic drug trade was on the rise, Brandic said. In line with trends reported in the 2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INSCR) Part I (reftel), Brandic said Serbian officials were seizing more heroin and other drugs than in previous years, especially in Novi Pazar (Sandzak) and at border crossings. Brandic said that major drug busts in 2007 (reported reftel) led to record seizures and interdictions. The heroin seized by Serbian law enforcement was of "very high quality."

METH LABS BUSTED

13. (U) Serbian law enforcement is seeing results of cooperation and training. Brandic was particularly proud of an April 2008 raid on a large amphetamine lab in Vinca, following a similar bust in Belgrade last year. Brandic said that the raid was planned over three months in cooperation with Slovenian and Bosnian authorities as the criminal organization consisted of nationals from all three countries. Brandic said the labs had enough capacity and technology "to supply all of Western Europe." Brandic said the success was attributable to training his officers had received on surveillance/investigation and close collaboration with neighboring and EU state counterparts. (Notably, many Dublin Group embassies sent police attaches to the May 7 meeting, showcasing this cooperation firsthand.)

PROBLEM AREAS

14. (U) Brandic said the main problem areas for Serbia's drug trafficking efforts were Novi Pazar and Kosovo (via UNMIK). Novi Pazar was a "major crossroads and storage area" for heroin and other drugs, and Brandic's office had found UNMIK "unresponsive" regarding requests for information sharing or joint planning for cross-border initiatives.

BELGRADE 00000462 002.2 OF 002

ASSISTANCE WELCOME

15. (U) Brandic welcomed additional training and technical assistance. Brandic and Belgrade Police official Dragan Rakic said their units would benefit from "any training and assistance from anywhere." Rakic participated in a Southeast European Co-operative Initiative (SECI) program which had a component in New Mexico, and praised the program as "high quality" training. Brandic said that neither his ministry nor the police had enough surveillance equipment to conduct multiple investigations at once. Some key laws needed to be passed or amended to improve counter-narcotics efforts. Brandic said his ministry was waiting for "amendments to narcotics laws" which would assist with surveillance and undercover operations.

ADDICTION PREVENTION EFFORTS STILL WEAK

16. (U) Serbia still does not have a comprehensive demand reduction policy. Rakic said the Belgrade police drug unit was ill-equipped to help with addiction, recovery, or detoxification and usually had to refer victims to social welfare offices. He said there were no statistics available on the number of addicts or drug users in Serbia. Brandic and Rakic said that the Health Ministry has responsibility for developing a comprehensive

national drug strategy by January 2009 that would include consultations with the Interior Ministry, police, customs, Justice Ministry (due to drug use in prison), Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe, and European Union (specifically the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction).

UNODC HOPES TO BE ACTIVE

17. (U) Aleksandar Stajic from the Belgrade UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) briefed the diplomats on a major regional anti-smuggling project. A total of 18 beneficiary countries, including the Balkans, Turkey, and Mediterranean and northern African countries, would have the chance to send customs and law enforcement officials to EU member states for training with counterparts. UNODC offices in Belgrade and Cairo would oversee the project, which was still looking for EU members to offer training venues and exchanges.

COMMENT

18. (U) Serbia still has a great deal of work ahead to improve its anti-drug trafficking capacity, but efforts from officials like Brandic and Rakic mean they are still making progress. It is also welcome that such law enforcement offices remain eager to cooperate with the USG and other Western countries, especially on an issue of such regional, mutual importance. For now, training and assistance projects related to combating drug trafficking are welcome. Brandic and Rakic did not address how they intended to further work with officials in Kosovo, following Kosovo's declaration of independence. Though cooperation with UNMIK had been weak, if Serbia continues not to recognize the EU-supplied rule of law EULEX contingent, cooperation on the administrative line with Kosovo will be even more problematic or non-existent. End Comment.

MUNTER